

State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC)

1900 Williams Street - P.O. Box 4789

Helena, MT 59604-4789

Telephone: (406) 841-3911 Fax: (406) 841-3966

Situation Report for July 31, 2007

(issued @ 1500 hrs.)



2007 FIRES

Operations

- Requests for State Financial Assistance

Report Includes:

- Background Information
 - Fire Restrictions & Closures
 - Air Quality
 - Road Closures/Travel Restrictions
- Current Incident Situation
- New Large Fires
- Weather
- State Declarations
- Local & Tribal Declarations
- Local Government Emergency
- Summary of State Resources Committed.

Important Websites:

State of Montana Fire Information:

<http://mt.gov/fire.asp>

National Interagency Fire Center

http://www.nifc.gov/fire_info/nfn.htm

Northern Rockies Coordination Center

<http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/>

I. Background Information

Since June, hot and dry weather has dominated the region creating very high to extreme fire conditions. Fire Indices are at an all time high while fuel moistures are low. Accompanying the high indices are weather patterns that have set the conditions for lightning and lightning caused starts. High pressure weather patterns over the region are responsible for the high temperatures and little to no moisture. Occasional cold fronts push through the region causing severe lightning storms that ignite wildfires. Rain has accompanied some of these fronts but a return to a high pressure system mitigates any moisture that fell. The weather forecasts project a continuing of the high pressure systems through August and possible into September.



Karen Nichols – Daily
Inter Lake

Fire Restrictions & Closures: Portions of the state are currently under Stage I or Stage II Fire Restrictions. For definitions of these restrictions, see:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stagel.pdf>

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stagell.pdf>

Fire Restrictions in effect for specific areas:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/index.html>

Air Quality & Smoke: The Montana Department of Environmental Quality issues a daily forecast and discussion of potential smoke impacts throughout the state. The forecast can be accessed at <http://www.deq.state.mt.us/fireupdates/index.asp>.

Road Closures & Travel Restrictions:

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/reports/alerts.shtml>

Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

[Current Fire Restrictions](#)

[Drought & Fire Updates](#)

[Drought & Fire News](#)

II. Current Incident Situation - Incidents listed according to current NRCG priority. *(This report includes summary information for Montana fires that are currently greater than 100 acres in size. Fires are being dropped from this report once they reach 100% containment)*

- A public meeting is scheduled for today at 5:00 p.m. at the Pavilion-Choteau City Park in Choteau Montana to provide updates on the Ahorn, Skyland and Fool Creek Fires.
- A public meeting concerning the Pattengail Creek Fire is scheduled for Wednesday Aug 1st at 7:30 PM in the Wise River Community Hall

Skyland on the Flathead NF near Summit. LaFave's Type 2 IMT. Skyland is 8,550 acres with 5% containment. Personnel assigned: 493. Structures are threatened. Evacuations are occurring. Cause: Lightning. Significant spotting contributed to rates of spread and strong winds increased fire spread intensity.

Ahorn Fire on the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Lewis and Clark County being managed by Bennett's Type I Team. Current size is estimated at 45,050 acres. 5% Containment. Personnel Assigned: 332. Structures threatened and more evacuations are anticipated. Cause: Lightning. The Ahorn Fire moved into the Benchmark area. For maps of the fire see: <http://www.incweb.org/incident/maps/805/>.

Mile Marker 124 is 3 miles east of Clinton. The Mile Marker 124 fire is 1,511 acres with 5% containment. Angell's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: 134. Structures are threatened. Cause: Under investigation. Traffic restrictions on Interstate 90, the MM

124 Fire spotted across I-90 and made a significant run to the east.

Sawmill Creek on the Lolo NF. The Sawmill Creek Fire is 320 acres with 0% containment. Heintz's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: 11. Cause: Lightning. Twenty-two miles southeast of Missoula, MT. Burning in timber with individual tree torching and backing fire. Structures threatened. Evacuations in Williams Gulch subdivision are ongoing. For maps of the fire see:

<http://www.inciweb.org/incident/maps/876/>.



Meriwether located in the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness is being managed by Bennett's Type I Team. Current size is estimated at 11,316 acres with 10% containment. Structures Threatened. Personnel Assigned: 182. Cause: Lightning. An emergency closure is in place that encompasses the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Area as well as Coulter Campground along the Missouri River. A River Closure is in place until further notice

for Upper Holter Reservoir from American Bar Gulch.

Garceau on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Kechter's Type 2 IMT. 3,045 acres and 50% contained. Personnel assigned: 302. Cause: Lightning. Timber and grass. Structures threatened. Weather moderated yesterday which kept the fire within containment lines. For maps of the fire see: <http://www.inciweb.org/incident/maps/882/>,

Owl on Yellowstone NP and Gallatin NF. Wilder's IMT2. The Owl Fire is 2,800 acres. 25% contained. Wilder's Type 2 IMT is in command. The fire is threatening structures. Personnel assigned: 409. Cause: Lightning.

Pattengail Creek on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF. 10 miles NE of Wisdom. The Pattengail Creek Fire is 4,295 acres and 25% contained. Type 3 Incident Organization. Personnel assigned: 43. Cause: Lightning. Drier weather and high Haines index will intensify fire behavior with continued spread to the northeast. For maps of the fire see: <http://www.inciweb.org/incident/maps/806/>.

Fool Creek WFU on the Lewis and Clark and Flathead National Forests in Lewis and Clark County remains at 9,900 acres. Reinartz's Fire Use Management Team. Fire behavior increased due to lower humidities and winds. Personnel assigned: 75. Cause: Lightning

Conger Creek on the Lolo National Forest, 20 miles north of Ovando. The fire is 2,700 acres with 0% containment. Structures are threatened. Personnel Assigned: 12. Cause: Lightning. The Conger Creek Fire burned aggressively downhill in heavy timber. The fire was plume dominated for much of yesterday afternoon. For maps of the fire see: <http://www.inciweb.org/incident/maps/825/>.

Wyman #2 on the Lolo NF is twenty-three miles east of Hamilton, MT. Timber. Wyman #2 Fire is 800 acres with 0% containment. Personnel assigned: 0. Cause: Lightning. Structures

threatened. Evacuation of campgrounds along Rock Creek have occurred and trails in effect. Running crown fire with long range spotting of 2-3 miles ahead of the main fire.

Fisher Point on the Lolo NF. The Fisher Point Fire is 200 acres and 0% contained Twenty miles east of Stevensville, MT. Timber. Personnel assigned: 21. Cause: Lightning. Extreme fire behavior with crowning, running and torching.

Brush Creek on the Flathead NF. Brush Creek is 600 acres with 0% containment. Twenty-five miles west of Whitefish, MT. Timber and understory. Personnel assigned: 37. Cause: Lightning. Active fire behavior with crowning and long-range spotting. Road and recreation site closures.

NEW LARGE FIRES (Large fires are fires over 100 acres in size)

Amphitheatre (Flathead National Forest): 123 acres. This WFU is 26 miles east of Condon.

Porcupine (Gallatin National Forest): 124 acres at 20 percent contained. This fire is 31 miles north of Livingston. Torching and spotting were reported.
Information: Call 406-522-2549 or visit the <http://www.inciweb.org/incident/889/>.

Turtlehead (Flathead National Forest): 117 acres. This WFU is 44 miles east of Polson.

For more information on Montana Fires: <http://www.inciweb.org/state/27/>.

III. Weather

The Haines Index (atmospheric instability) will be lower and temperatures somewhat cooler except in eastern Montana and North Dakota with possible isolated thundershowers in eastern Montana. Relative humidities will be lower across the Geographic Area. Western Montana and northern Idaho will have afternoon gusty winds. The risk of large fire growth still exists due to extremely dry fuel.

Red Flag Warnings or Fire Weather Watches: No Red Flag Warnings or Fire Watches today.

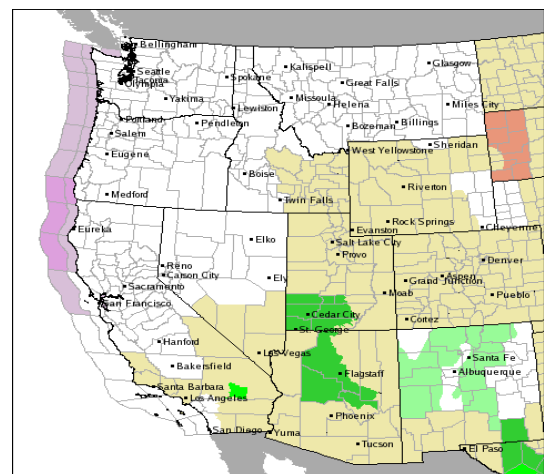
Definitions of a Fire Weather Watch and a Red Flag Warning:

A fire weather watch or red flag warning is issued when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions support extreme fire danger. These products are written for land and fire managers to highlight the increased fire danger.

A fire weather watch is issued up to 72 hours before the above conditions are expected to occur.

A red flag warning is issued when the conditions above are occurring or expected to occur within the next 24 hours.

<http://www.weather.gov/>



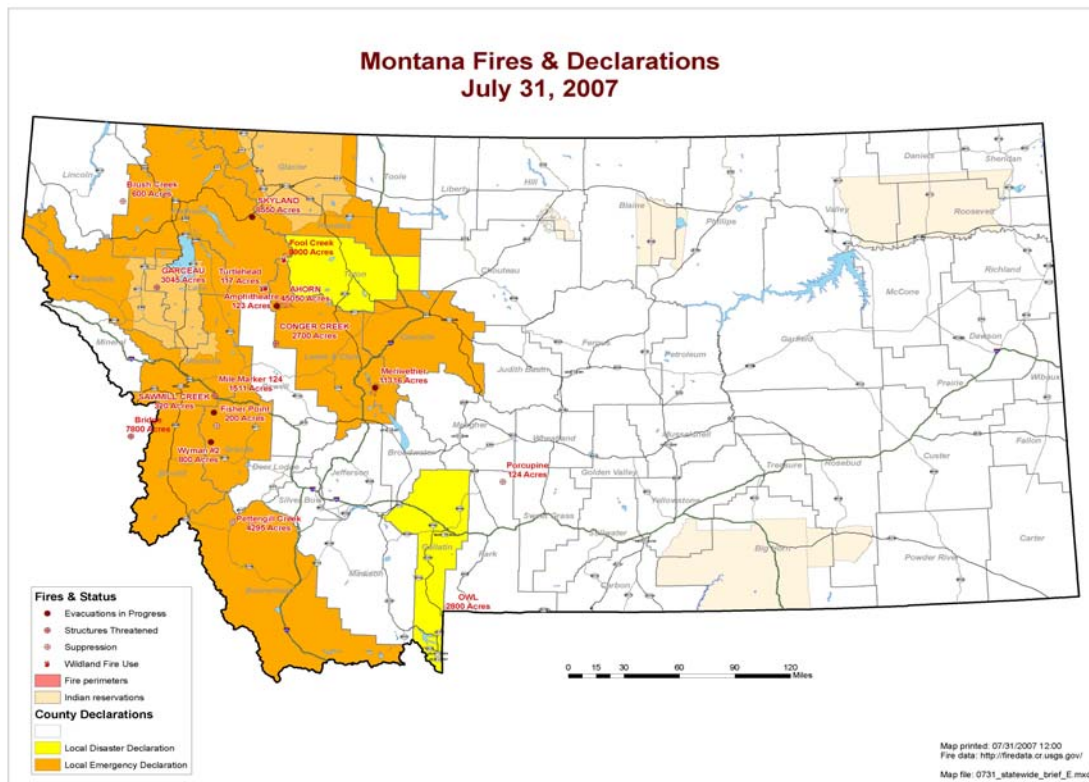
Weather Forecast For current Fire Weather Predictions, see the Daily Outlook at:
http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/daily_outlook.pdf.

Fire Behavior Forecast For current Fire Behavior Predictions, see:
http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/fire_behavior/fire_behavior.pdf

IV. **State Declarations**

- Statewide Declaration of a Wildland Fire Emergency

V. **Local and Tribal Declarations**



- **State of Emergency.** The following counties have declared a state of emergency:

Lewis and Clark
Lake
Cascade
Beaverhead
Glacier
Flathead
Blackfeet Nation

Ravalli
Granite
Missoula
Sanders
Pondera
Prairie

- **Disaster Declaration.** The following counties have declared a wildfire disaster:

Teton

Gallatin

VI. Local Government Emergency Operations

- The Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operation Center was activated on July 19, 2007.

VII. Requests for State Financial Assistance

- N/A

VIII. Summary of State Resources Committed (through the SECC)

- MT-DES currently has two employees deployed with Incident Management Teams (through the Northern Rockies Coordination Center).
- One Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk module is deployed for initial attack. The Blackhawk and its module are stationed in Helena.
- A second Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk and module is deployed for initial attack. This Blackhawk and its module are stationed in Missoula.
- One Montana Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook and module has been deployed to assist Bennett's Type 1 Team with fire support on the Ahorn and Meriwether fires. The Chinook and its module are stationed in Helena.
- A Montana Army National Guard Security Team (26 personnel) has been ordered for the Mile Marker 124 Fire and will be deployed today (7/31/07).
- A second Montana Army National Guard Security Team (26 personnel) has been ordered for the Meriwether Fire and will be deployed on 8/1/07.
- A third Montana Army National Guard Security Team (26 personnel) has been ordered for the Sawmill Fire and will be deployed on 8/2/07.
- A third Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk and module has been ordered to support initial attack efforts at the Northwest Land Office. This Blackhawk and its module will report to the Northwest Land Office (in Kalispell) on 8/2/07.
- July 20, 2007 at 0700 the SECC was activated and staffed to a Level III status with extended hours (0700-1900) The MT DES staff Duty Officer is available 24 hrs and may be reached at (406) 841-3911.